The Improvement Imperative

Successful Intervention Strategies,
A Different Approach to Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Assistance and
A Renewed Authority for Action

EVERY CHILD

PROFICIENT & PREPARED FOR
SUCCESS

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Panel on
Interventions in Low-Performing Schools

August 2008

August 15, 2008

Dear Colleague:

This is a report from the Blue Ribbon Panel on Interventions in Low-Performing Schools, The Improvement Imperative: Successful Intervention Strategies, a Different Approach to Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Assistance, and a Renewed Authority for Action.

The report is designed to provide a variety of intervention strategies that schools and districts may consider as they continue to focus on improving student learning. Many of these strategies have been tried and found to be successful in increasing student achievement by Kentucky principals and teachers in Kentucky schools. Included in the report for your use is a list of resources. Additionally, the report outlines the systemic model of intervention and support that KDE will be undertaking to assist and support schools and districts. The report also includes recommendations for a legislative package that will give KDE a renewed authority to intervene in our lowest performing schools and districts.

We hope that the document will prove to be a valuable resource in the hands of teachers, principals and administrators that will provide strategies and ideas that you can use as you continue to focus on moving every child to proficiency. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Deputy Commissioner Elaine Farris via e-mail at elaine.farris@education.ky.gov or by phone at 502/564-5130.

Sincerely,

Jon E. Draud
JED:EF:vb

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Foreword

In January 2008, soon after taking the reins as Kentucky's new Commissioner of Education,. Jon E. Draud sent a letter to representatives of stakeholder groups across the Commonwealth asking them to join him in addressing one of the most critical issues facing educators to date – how to maximize student achievement, particularly in low-performing schools. In his letter, Draud reiterated one of his and the Kentucky Board of Education's primary goals – to ensure that Kentucky's public schools are on track to reach proficiency by the year 2014.

From the beginning of his tenure, he and the board had been engaged in conversations around the progress of all schools toward the goal of proficiency by 2014. They noted that, while many schools had already met this goal and many more were on their way to reaching it, other schools were struggling and, absent immediate intervention, would not meet their student achievement goals. The board expressed a sense of urgency that action be taken to assist those schools most at risk for failure to meet their targets.

To that end, Commissioner Draud invited individuals representing stakeholders from across the Commonwealth to participate on a Blue Ribbon Panel to review intervention strategies that have been successful in improving academic achievement in low-performing schools in Kentucky and other states, in spite of barriers to education like poverty and poverty-related issues. The work of the Blue Ribbon Panel is designed to address all four of the goals of the Kentucky Board of Education:
- High Student Performance
- High-Quality Teaching and Administration
- Strong and Supportive Environment for Each School and Every Child
- High-Performing Schools and Districts

In an interview in the department's flagship publication, Kentucky Teacher, Draud outlined his hopes for what could be accomplished through the Blue Ribbon Panel. He emphasized the number of programs and services currently provided by the Kentucky Department of Education to help low-performing schools improve and expressed his disappointment that despite those programs, some schools still are not improving. The Blue Ribbon Panel, he hoped, would accomplish a number of objectives:
- help ignite a sense of urgency for school improvement among all Kentucky educators
- focus on strategies and resources that have been successful in helping struggling schools raise the achievement levels of all students, including an analysis of academic assistance programs from other states
- re-examine current legislation governing state intervention with low-performing schools and discuss changes to the law that would allow KDE to intervene sooner in low-performing schools
- build relationships among all education stakeholders and encourage a more collaborative, coordinated focus on school improvement and opportunities for increasing community involvement in school success

At the initial meeting of the panel, Commissioner Draud challenged the members to undertake this important work and outlined their charge:
- to determine the best possible strategies for intervention and make recommendations on their findings
- to make recommendations for how KDE may intervene and provide assistance differently to dramatically improve student achievement in our lowest performing schools and districts
- to make recommendations for a legislative package to deal with lowest performing schools and districts

Why Convene a Blue Ribbon Panel?

With the advent of mandated statewide and national accountability testing measures (CATS and NCLB); one of the greatest issues facing educators across all 50 states is the need to address issues of low student achievement. Numerous studies from across the country repeatedly note that some schools are far more effective than others at meeting the needs of students. In Kentucky, we need look no further than our assessment scores and other noncognitive data to confirm this.

In Kentucky, we have high-performing schools where children are prepared for success. Even though some students are faced with distinct disadvantages that may thwart their progress, these schools have been able to overcome barriers and provide a culture where learning is the focus. In contrast we have other schools that are chronically low-performing and significantly less than proficient with their student populations and, in multiple instances, this persists in spite of the tireless efforts of talented and dedicated teachers, principals and support personnel. The fact remains that we are not meeting the needs of each and every student in the Commonwealth. It will be only through a fundamental shift in education that this cycle will be broken. While we are making some strides, we want to bolster our education from early childhood to learning beyond postsecondary, capitalize on what we know is working effectively and advocate for closing existing gaps.

A recent review of state assessment data with the Kentucky Board of Education showed that, not only were there schools not meeting their CATS and NCLB targets, but some schools continually failed to meet those targets over more than one biennium. A projection of the numbers of schools that were on target to meet their goals by 2014, just six years from now, heightened the sense of urgency to look for new ways to assist schools in increasing student academic performance.

While that served as an impetus for taking a closer look at how KDE was supporting work with schools, it was not the sole consideration for taking a hard look at what KDE was doing to work with schools. The primary reason for re-examining our efforts is that we believe that it is our job, collectively as the adults in the Commonwealth, to make sure that all students have an equal opportunity to attend a high-performing school and learn from and be led by a knowledgeable, respected and caring faculty, undergirded by great leadership, in a supportive community actively engaged in their success. We believe that, as the state education agency, staff are responsible for working with schools and districts to identify those things they need to help students make the achievement gains that are required for student learning and a successful transition to postsecondary and the workforce.

The wheel does not need to be reinvented. The Standards and Indicators for School Improvement, which serve as the benchmarks for making determinations about school and district performance; the scholastic audit and review process, which helps to identify and prioritize areas of needed improvements in schools and districts; the assistance process for schools, whereby Highly Skilled Educators are assigned to lower-performing schools in a coaching capacity; and the district assistance process, where districts select to participate in a State Assistance Team (SAT), Network Assistance Team (NAT), or Voluntary Partnership Assistance Team (VPAT) process to receive leadership assistance, will remain in place.

The work of the Blue Ribbon Panel should not be interpreted as a departure from these processes, which have been extremely valuable in the past and will continue to form the central foundation of our work. Rather, the work of the panel should be viewed as a way to examine our currently existing processes in a new light to ascertain whether there are additional local needs that KDE can and should be addressing. The work of the panel will not replace the successful practices already in place, but will bring to the table some additional means by which KDE in collaboration with interested partners can work with schools and districts.

We currently have strategies, statutes and regulations in place that give the Kentucky Board of Education and school district leadership the authority to act when conventional practices and strategies have not improved student performance in a timely manner; however, the panel strongly indicated that, when data indicates that improvement has not occurred for more than one biennium, KDE and or district leadership should have the authority to intervene immediately and intensively to dramatically impact improvement. Chronically low-performing schools and/or districts should be encouraged to create plans that may include drastically different types of strategies (such as specific turnaround strategies), ideas and initiatives to improve student performance as

quickly as possible. The Turnaround Challenge, a report of the Mass Insight Education and Research Institute in Boston, Massachusetts, that was shared with the panel at the request of one of the members, has some strategies and ideas that schools and districts should review. A PowerPoint document summarizing highlights of the report is attached (Appendix A).

Please see Appendix E for a description of the process by which the panel operated.

The Panel's Charges

Charge 1: Determine the best possible strategies for intervention and make recommendations on findings.

Successful Intervention Strategies

In reviewing research on successful intervention strategies for low-performing schools, one of the realities that continued to surface was that education researchers and media pundits often admonish educators and the general public that "we know what works; it just needs to be done." While many of us know certain strategies that we have found to be effective, busy teachers and principals constantly working with students do not have the time to do the research necessary to find all the strategies that might be of assistance to them in their daily practice. Just as a strategy that works with one student may not be as effective with another, "one-size-fits-all" solutions will not work for every school.

Strategies for working with schools should be as individualized as strategies for working with students. The charge to the panel members was to review research on successful practices, bring their own experiences about what they had seen that worked in schools and use their collective experiences and expertise to develop a document of successful intervention strategies that could be gathered and disseminated for use by schools across the state. (A bibliography of resources that were available to the panel during their deliberations is contained in Appendix B.)

As the panel members began to review the research that was available to them and share current and past experiences from their individual and varied perspectives, it was clear that many panel members held intense opinions based on personal experience. The group's task was to identify the six most important intervention strategies and prioritize

them. Not surprisingly, a number of suggestions appeared consistently across small group discussions: critical role of leadership; student-centered schools relentlessly focused on the instructional core; alignment of rigorous curriculum; assessment that informs instruction along with identifiable intervention measures in place; teachers with a solid knowledge base in both content and instructional best practice; high-performing teachers assigned to students with the greatest need; adults creating a culture of high expectations for all students and refusing to allow failure; and a level of school-community collaboration supporting students in and out of schools. Specific ways that these ideas had been applied in Kentucky schools and their outcomes also were shared, providing a practical way to transform general strategies into immediate action.

The practices that the groups identified through its discussions began to be collected in a document entitled Promising Practices from Kentucky High Performing Schools and Districts (Appendix C), which was expanded as the discussions generated additional ideas.

Over the course of the meetings, additional resources for review were suggested by members to contribute to the thinking. One of the resources was The Turnaround Challenge, the report of the Mass Insight Education and Research Institute in Boston, Massachusetts. This national initiative is aimed at helping schools, districts, schools and partners successfully address the issue of chronically low-performing schools (See Appendix A). For more information and a copy of the full Mass Insight report, please go to http://www.massinsight.org.

After a review of the Mass Insight work, the panel members felt that using that framework to organize the intervention strategies they had collected would provide a logical, easy-to-follow blueprint for schools that should implement improvement across all areas. The focus of the Mass Insight work was to take quick and decisive action around low-performing schools to rapidly improve student performance. The panel members felt that the framework, which was gleaned from studies of the success stories of high-performing schools serving high-poverty students, would have the most impact in turning around schools with consistent low student performance. The framework also correlated easily with the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement*, which are familiar to educators across the state and provide the central focus of KDE's work with schools that have not yet reached proficiency goals. The Promising Practices Framework document that resulted from summarizing and organizing the primary intervention strategies under the Mass Insight framework appears on Page 11. When looking at the Promising Practices Framework, you will see that the strategies are aligned with Kentucky's Standards and Indicators for School Improvement. Also, the numbers that appear after the strategies illustrate how the same strategy could be connected to other intervention categories.

*School - http://education.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/FE36717B-3CF1-4FF4-9B57-F2D47EC79EB6/0/SchoolLevelPerformanceDescriptorsandGlossaryforKentuckysSISI.pdf

* District - http://education.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/44CD31AA-0653-44C4-8802-7055C13FE7EE/0/DLPDforKYSISIweb.pdf

Promising Practices Framework

1 Safety, Discipline & Engagement
Students feel secure and inspired to learn.

- Establish Student Leadership Teams to celebrate success and solve problems.
- Utilize instructional strategies incorporating various technologies based on talents and interests of students. (5)
- Create community, family and school partnerships to celebrate success and meet challenges. (2, 3)

2 Action against Adversity
Schools directly address their students' poverty-driven deficits.

- Create a system for all faculty and staff to make multiple home visits to connect to families. (3)
- Target parents across all demographics to be partners. in school improvement.

3 Close Student-Adult Relationships
Students have positive and enduring mentor / teacher relationships.

- Create a culture of adults (faculty and community members) mentoring students if parents are unable to facilitate students' education and provide the help children need to move them along the P-16 system. (9)
- Have a lower pupil/teacher ratio so that relationships can be established more readily. (4,5)
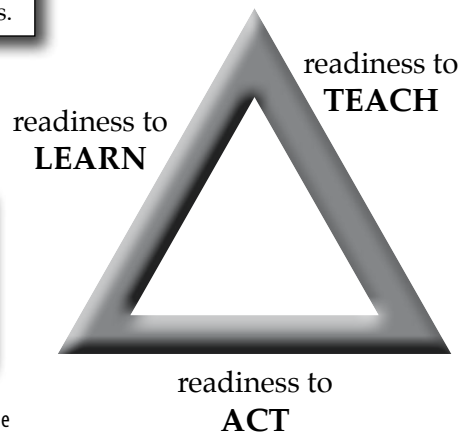
readiness to **TEACH**

readiness to **LEARN**

readiness to **ACT**

4 Shared Responsibility for Achievement
Staff feel deep accountability and a missionary zeal for student achievement.

- Build transition teams between elementary, middle and high schools and postsecondary institutions. (6,7,8)
- Develop and refine curriculum documents and instructional lessons to share responsibility for student success vertically across the P-16 education system . (6,7)
- Build culture to support all students learning at high levels; high expectations for faculty knowledge and dispositions to build relationships with students, families and community members.
- Challenge ALL students with a rigorous curriculum and expand participation in the Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate programs. Provide supports for students through early bird classes and lunch reviews to assist students to meet AP/IB assessment requirements.

5 Personalization of Instruction
Individualized teaching is based on diagnostic assessment and adjustable time on task.

- Develop a formative and interim assessment system supporting the specific instructional needs of each student to meet a rigorous core curriculum. Provide interventions in a timely manner. Use data from assessment system to guide instruction. Teachers meet in professional learning communities to design instruction to meet specific needs of students. Adults assume responsibility for all students to learn at high levels. Helping students plan for their future is a priority.(6)

6 Professional Teaching Culture
Continuous improvement through collaboration and job-embedded learning

- Create a system of teacher professional development that includes providing time for teachers to work together weekly. Teachers work in teams (create a professional learning community) to decide what students need to know, how teachers will know if each student has learned the content, how the faculty will respond when students do not learn the content, how the system can enrich and extend the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency, and how the adults in the building can create a "no-fail" culture. (7)
- Empower leaders across all role groups (teachers, curriculum specialists, principals, district leaders) to establish professional learning communities to solve specific problems of practice. (7,8) Include higher education institutions in this work.

Efficiency: Standards for School Improvement 7, 8 & 9

7 Resource Authority
School leaders can make mission-driven decisions regarding people, time, money and programs.

- Recruit and hire people who can relate to and motivate students and get them excited about learning. (3,7,8) Retain high-performing teachers in low-performing schools. (8)
- Assign most experienced staff to students of highest need.
- Align all instructional and fiscal resources to meet student needs (schedule, state and federal programs, etc.). (8)
- Train boards to hire superintendents focused on learning.

8 Resource Ingenuity
Leaders are adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships.

- Build relationships with local community, business partners and postsecondary institutions; get real about issues – all sectors of the community and region must own the expectations for the education of each child. (9)
- Provide all members of community and region with current data and information in order to build capacity.
- Provide community members with an integral, active role that will help accelerate student achievement.

9 Agility in the Face of Turbulence
Leaders, teachers and systems are flexible and inventive in responding to constant unrest.

- Change or eliminate some of the rules set by district by which schools must operate; create "turnaround zones" and provide specific support and assistance to those zones.

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MASS INSIGHT

Charge 2: Make recommendations for how KDE may intervene and provide assistance differently to dramatically improve student achievement in our lowest-performing schools and districts.

KDE Assistance: A Systemic Model of Intervention and Support

The Kentucky Department of Education's current practices of intervening in low-performing schools and districts are outlined in statute and regulation, have been in place for a number of years and are well-known across the Commonwealth. Schools that are low-performing under the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) receive a scholastic audit or review and Commonwealth School Improvement Funds, with the lowest-performing receiving the assistance of a Highly Skilled Educator. Districts that are low-performing under CATS are provided an option of working with a State Assistance Team, Network Assistance Team, or a Voluntary Partnership Assistance Team. Under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, there is a sequence of tiered interventions that takes place, including notice to parents, the provision of supplemental education services and the availability of transfer out of low-performing schools.

These provisions have been sufficient to inspire success for many schools and districts. There are schools that have, after the identification of areas of greatest need through an audit process and the provision of technical assistance through a Highly Skilled Educator, gotten back on track toward attaining the mark as set forth on their goal lines. However, there are some schools and districts that have not been able to attain the levels of academic achievement that students need to be successful after they leave school and enter postsecondary education or the workforce. Because of this, KDE has begun a dialogue about new
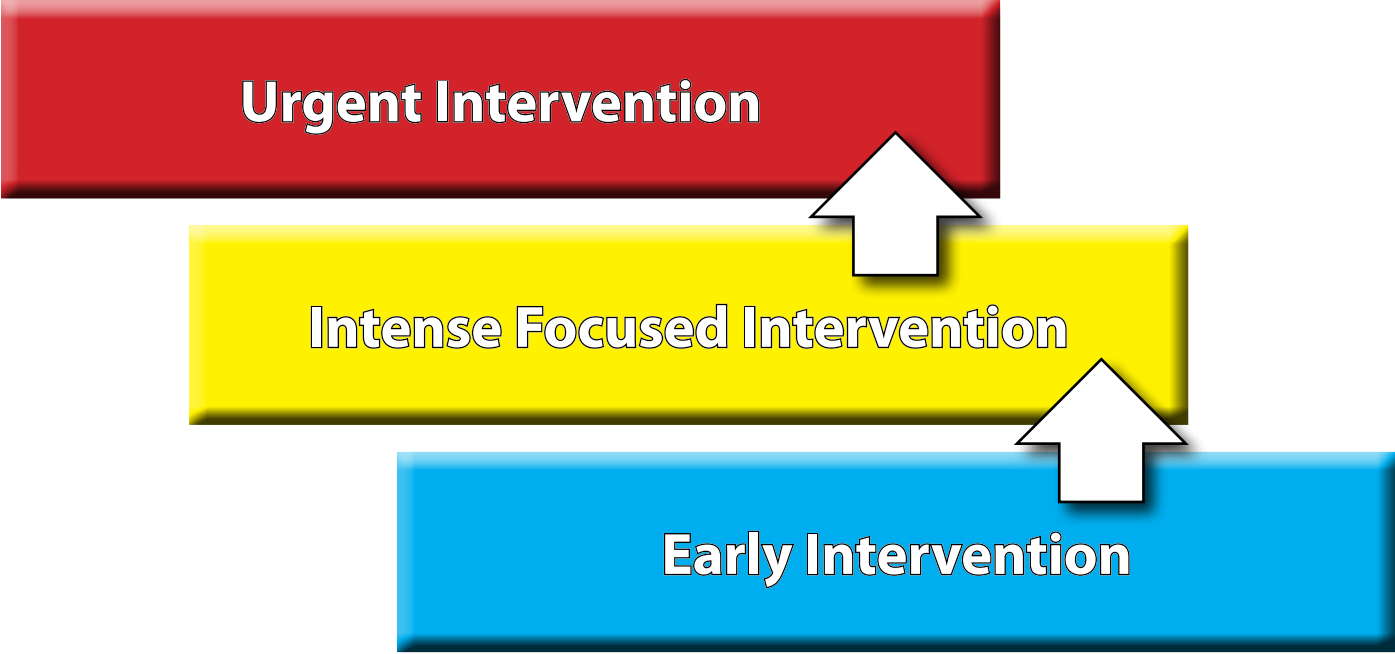
and more effective ways to work with these critical situations so that all students will have an equal opportunity to achieve success, regardless of the community in which they live or the financial status of their parents. In many instances, the traditional strategies and interventions used to address the issues faced by these schools and districts have not been successful.

Because of the challenging nature of the work to be undertaken, the high stakes involved when children's futures are at risk and the sense of urgency engendered, the panel resolved that the recommendations with regard to KDE providing assistance differently would need to require immediate and dramatic intervention, provide the schools the resources necessary to create success and be designed to build local capacity. The model could not be a "shotgun approach" to intervention – it must provide a systemic model of intervention and support that will allow for the development of excellence which will be sustainable for years to come.

The model that the group believed held the most promise for success is a level intervention model that is illustrated by the graphic and explanation on the following pages.

Blue Ribbon Panel on Interventions in
Low-Performing Schools and Districts
KDE Assistance: A Systemic Model of Intervention and Support

Step 1	**Initial Determination of Level of Assistance** • data analysis (state, federal, school) • scholastic audit/review/self study • site visit
Step 2	**Assign Schools and Districts to the Level Intervention Model Based on the Intervention and Level of Assistance Needed** **Urgent Intervention** **Intense Focused Intervention** **Early Intervention**
Step 3	**Determine Personnel/Team Needed to Implement Interventions/Support**
Step 4	**Ongoing Monitoring of Intervention Model for Timely Implementation and Success**

Step 1 - Initial Determination of Level of Assistance

The determination of the level of intervention for a school or district will be based on a number of factors, which may include, but not be limited to:

- the number of points from a proficient score of 100 on the CATS accountability index
- CATS accountability goals
- NCLB adequate yearly progress scores
- high percentages of students in the achievement gap
- critical needs identified at the middle and secondary school levels

Schools that are classified as successful may be included if there are significant gaps in achievement. Districts with more than one school in need of assistance and support may require district-level assistance. Data sources that will be reviewed to determine the level of intervention needed by a school/district will include CATS and NCLB assessment data and analysis; information gathered through scholastic audit/review/self-study processes; and other information or data available to KDE.

Step 2 - Assign Schools and Districts to the Level Intervention Model Based on the Intervention and Level of Assistance Needed

Once it is determined that a school will need assistance or interventions, additional analysis of available data will determine assignment to the appropriate level of intervention. After determining the level of intervention, the planning team will determine the needs to be addressed and the intervention strategies/initiatives to be included in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan and/or the Comprehensive District Improvement Plan in order to improve student performance. An intensively focused study of the school's curriculum, instruction and assessment processes will occur, as well as a systematic review of the school's culture. Schools at the urgent and intense levels of intervention will be required to develop a plan that will be reviewed by KDE and will target the areas of greatest need, including leadership, as indicated from the data. Schools that have been at Assistance Level (CATS) or Tier

(NCLB) status for successive biennia (chronically low-performing) with no change in leadership during that period of time will be required to receive immediate and intense intervention. Schools and/or districts in the urgent and intense levels of intervention will be expected to improve student performance in one biennium. Schools, as potential candidates for early intervention status, may have less intensive needs that will be addressed in collaboration with the district to improve student performance and to prevent them from moving into assistance or tier status. Targeted assistance in a single or small number of areas, such as interventions in a specific grade level or content area, may be all that is needed for improvement.

Step 3 - Determine Personnel/Team Needed to Implement Interventions/Support

A Highly Skilled Educator/Assistance and Support School Improvement Success Team (HSE/ASSIST) organized by KDE will be responsible for coordinating the collaborative work with the school and district. While the work will be coordinated by the HSE/ASSIST team, a broad range of expertise from a wide variety of sources will be tapped to assist these schools to reach their goals. Because the Blue Ribbon Panel brought together individuals representing a number of different perspectives to provide their input on this issue, their discussions brought forward a number of strategies and resources available to assist schools and districts in their race to reach proficiency. While not all will be mentioned specifically here, KDE is considering several different structures in the support team process that would take advantage of the experience and resources of a broad array of partners and also would strengthen the capacity of local districts and schools to provide practical advice and proven best practices to each other on a peer-to-peer basis.

One such structure currently under consideration is organizing the state into regional clusters for the purpose of providing shared local networking, partnerships, professional development and technical assistance. Within the clusters, intervention schools could be paired with similar high-performing partners, and highly-trained content specialists in the region could be identified and paired with expert local teachers to provide a pool of locally available expertise to assist low-performing schools and build regional capacity. Another option under review is

building school- and district-level capacity by including local school district personnel in training programs that are the same or similar to those provided to the Highly Skilled Educator cadre. KDE will continue to pursue these plans as the process moves forward.

Step 4 - Ongoing Monitoring for Fidelity of Implementation and Achievement of Timelines

The improvement plan and the required data/evidence of implementation will be periodically reviewed to determine the effectiveness of the interventions in resolving the identified area of need. Emphasis should be placed on improving student performance within two years. The plan will be constantly informed by the collection of data and revised as warranted based upon that data. The expectation is that the assistance may no longer be needed at the end of a biennium.

KDE will assure the incorporation of an evaluation process to periodically review the effectiveness of the intervention model.

Charge 3: Make recommendations for a legislative package to deal with lowest performing schools and districts.

A Renewed Authority to Act

In beginning any new initiative, especially in a high-stakes area such as providing interventions in low-performing schools and districts, one of the first questions generally raised relates to the legal authority that allows for such action. In 1990, the Kentucky Education Reform Act put into place new provisions establishing broad parameters for interventions in schools and districts that failed to meet student performance goals on the statewide assessment. Other areas of the act mandated management audits to address critically ineffective or inefficient man-

agement and the possible designation of districts as either state-assisted or state-managed. Still other sections of the act addressed the removal or suspension of public school officers and the procedures, grounds and conditions under which those actions could occur. Since 1990, the Kentucky Board of Education established regulatory frameworks that further define the circumstances under which these intervention strategies must be undertaken. These provide the current legal framework authorizing interventions in low-performing schools.

In looking at possible recommendations for a legislative package, the panel members first discussed what they believed would be absolutely necessary to have in place to make a difference with low-performing schools and districts. They recognized that disconnected, isolated and episodic change strategies would be unlikely to be able to bring to bear the systemic, deeply embedded, across-the-board changes that they desired. Driven by the overarching principle that the Kentucky Board of Education should quickly intervene in chronically low-performing schools that cannot improve student achievement in one biennium, they wanted to make sure they crafted a systematic approach that combined sufficient intervention authority to accomplish needed reform with adequate flexibility to allow an individualized approach to maximize the possibility for success. Their holistic approach, outlined in the chart on Page 19, identified governance as a crucial centerpiece of the proposal, recommending that low student academic performance be included in the statute providing grounds for removal of a superintendent or school board member. Other recommendations for legislative action provided more specificity in terms of the composition of the team that will be assisting the school and established a set of tools that the team would have available to assist in these situations, including funding for reduction of class size; compensation incentives to recruit and retain teachers; and coaching and mentoring programs for teachers, administrators, schools and districts. In order to assure successful implementation, they also addressed the need for regulatory changes to provide additional clarification of the process and recommended areas for which additional appropriations will be required.

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Interventions in Low-Performing Schools
The Improvement Imperative
Statutory or Regulatory Actions for Implementation

Panel Recommendation		Change Needed to Implement
Charge 1 - SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION STRATEGIES		
Because intervention strategies generally need to be individualized to specific school needs, any legal mandate to authorize strategies should not be restrictive.		• The state may wish to encourage the use of some of the most effective strategies identified by the panel through a mandate that they be established or funded.
Charge 2 - KDE ASSISTANCE: A SYSTEMIC MODEL OF INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT		
Implement KDE Assistance: *A Systemic Model of Intervention and Support*, **a four-step intervention model that requires:** • **Initial Determination of Level of Assistance** • **Assigning Schools and Districts to an Intervention Model Based on the Intervention and Level of Assistance Needed** • **Determine Personnel/Team Needed to Implement Interventions/ Support** • **Ongoing Monitoring for Timely Implementation and Success**	• The current authorizing statute, KRS 158.6455 (4), provides broad authority in terms of assistance to schools not meeting goals and currently includes but is not limited to the scholastic audit, school improvement plans, Commonwealth School Improvement Funds, assistance from highly skilled certified staff, evaluation of school personnel and student transfer to successful schools. • KRS 158.782 currently allows broad authority for providing highly skilled education assistance to schools and districts. • KRS 158.805 currently allows the KBE broad authority to determine the priorities for the use of Commonwealth School Improvement Funds.	• The existing statutory language is sufficiently broad to allow the new model. More specific details of the intervention model can be established through the regulatory process, possibly in revisions to currently existing regulations in 703 KAR Chapter 5. • An additional appropriation may be required.

Panel Recommendation	Existing Legal Authority	Change Needed to Implement
RENEWED AUTHORITY FOR ACTION/LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE		
According to findings of school and district scholastic audits/reviews, any governing entity in a school district may lose its governing powers, including principals, school-based decision making councils, superintendent and board of education members after following the process required by statute.	• Authority currently exists pursuant to KRS 156.132 for the KBE, upon recommendation of the Commissioner of Education, to suspend or remove a superintendent or local board of education member for immorality, misconduct in office, incompetency, willful neglect of duty or non-feasance. Under that statute, KBE, upon recommendation of the Commissioner of Education, also may recommend (to the proper school officials with direct authority) the removal of a superintendent, principal, teacher or council member on grounds of immorality, misconduct in office, incompetency, willful neglect of duty or non-feasance. • There is a provision allowing transfer of the authority of the school council for schools in assistance pursuant to the scholastic audit findings under KRS 160.345. • Pursuant to KRS 160.346, the local board has the authority to remove a school council member.	• Removal of a superintendent or school board member for chronic low student academic performance should be added as separate grounds via a statutory amendment to KRS 156.132 to enable clear authority.
An intervention team of five or more members would be assigned to the school full-time, including a highly skilled principal/administrator to govern the school if the scholastic audit/reviews recommend such. The rest of the team would consist of content-level specialists/master teachers to address the academic needs, a school counselor as needed to address the affective needs and other personnel with specialized skills as determined by the needs of the school. Pilot implementation of this process by allowing districts to submit applications with letters of support from key stakeholders, such as teacher leaders, council members, the principal and superintendent, could be an option if appropriated funds are limited.	• The regulation currently implementing the audit process (703 KAR 5:120) establishes standards for providing assistance to schools. • The regulation provides more authority to intervene than has previously been exercised. The highly skilled educator statute (KRS 158.782) authorizes personnel evaluation and recommendations concerning retention, dismissal or transfer of personnel. Because of other statutes, interpretation has been that that the educator needs to be principal-certified and trained in evaluation in order to evaluate staff, which would have prevented all HSEs from being able to perform evaluations.	• Details of the intervention model, including governance determination, team membership and implementation issues, can be established through revisions to currently existing regulations in 703 KAR Chapter 5. • To allow the exercise of evaluation authority, it is recommended that KRS 158.782 be amended to clearly authorize team leaders to perform evaluations of personnel, notwithstanding certification and evaluation statutes. • A major need in this area is an appropriation. • There will be a need to assure coordination with recommendations from the Assessment and Accountability Task Force that address consequences for low-performing schools and districts.

Panel Recommendation	Existing Legal Authority	Change Needed to Implement
As appropriate, school improvement funds should be provided to reduce pupil/teacher ratios to 15 to 1 or below, using flexibility in staffing to accommodate issues of availability of space.	• Unless the Budget Bill provides otherwise, KRS 158.805 authorizes the KBE to establish priorities for the use of Commonwealth School Improvement Funds. • The current Budget Bill authorizes the Commissioner of Education to use these funds to support schools needing assistance or to meet NCLB requirements.	• No legislative action required, but additional appropriations may be needed.
As appropriate, a comprehensive system of curriculum, instruction and assessment will be implemented.		• No legislative action required. This could be a recommendation in the scholastic audit for inclusion in the school improvement plan.
A turnaround plan and calendar will be developed, implemented and monitored.		• No legislative action required. The school improvement plan could serve as the vehicle.
As appropriate, an incentive package will be provided: • **to recruit and retain teachers and principals** • **to provide and fund training and mentoring programs pairing experienced, high-performing mentor teachers, administrators, schools and districts with less-experienced partners** • **to allow for voluntary exchanges in teaching assignments**	• A differentiated compensation statute (KRS 157.075) and regulation (702 KAR 3:310) currently exist that could provide the authorization for an incentive package, but no funding is attached. (KDE previously used federal funds to implement a differentiated compensation pilot in a limited number of districts, but it was not sustained.)	• No legislative action required. • Consideration could be given to using school improvement funding to support this initiative, if sufficient. • If school improvement funds are not used, an additional appropriation will be needed to support implementation of the recommended approach.
A statewide system of evaluation will be implemented for teachers, principals and superintendents.	• KRS 156.557 and 704 KAR 3:345 currently address certified employee evaluation programs and require these programs to be developed by the school district and approved by the Kentucky Department of Education.	• A single, statewide system of evaluation would require a statutory amendment to KRS 156.557. A voluntary pilot program or a legislative resolution would assist in working out issues prior to a state-level implementation. • Sufficient funding for adequate professional development will be needed to ensure high quality and consistency of implementation statewide. • KSBA is working on an evaluation system for superintendents that should be considered as the work moves forward.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TURNAROUND CHALLENGE

A Report from the
Mass Insight Education and
Research Institute

THE TURNAROUND CHALLENGE

School Turnaround:

- a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that produces significant gains in student achievement within two academic years

- We have elementary, middle and high schools that may be identified as turnaround schools.

- Despite an increasing sense of urgency about the nation's lowest performing schools, efforts to turn these schools around have largely failed.

- These schools and the systems supporting them require fundamental rethinking, not incremental change.

The Problem:

- Five percent, or 5,000, of America's schools are on track to fall into the most extreme federal designation for not making adequate progress by 2009-2010.

- If the bottom five percent of schools represent our greatest challenge, do we need to think differently about how we will intervene in these schools?

Why do these schools struggle?

- Their challenges are substantial.

- They are dysfunctional.

- The system of which they are a part is not responsive to the needs of high-poverty, high-needs student populations they serve.

- They are using a 20th-century model to solve the challenges of schools in the 21st century.

Turnaround: A New Response

- Dramatic change requires urgency and an atmosphere of crisis.

The High-Performing, High-Poverty (HPHP) Readiness Model

readiness to LEARN

1 **Safety, Discipline & Engagement**
Students feel secure and inspired to learn

2 **Action against Adversity**
Schools directly address their students' poverty-driven deficits

3 **Close Student-Adult Relationships**
Students have positive and enduring mentor/teacher relationships

readiness to TEACH

4 **Shared Responsibility for Achievement**
Staff feel deep accountability and a missionary zeal for students achievement

5 **Personalization of Instruction**
Individualized teaching based on diagnostic assessment and adjustable time on task

6 **Professional Teaching Culture**
Continuous improvement through collaboration and job-embedded learning

readiness to ACT

7 **Resource Authority**
School leaders can make mission-driven decisions regarding people, time, money & program

8 **Resource Ingenuity**
Leaders are adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships

9 **Agility in the Face of Turbulence**
Leaders, teachers and systems are flexible and inventive in responding to constant unrest

The Challenge of Change

- Reasons for a general lack of success
  - culture of low expectations
  - reform-fatigued faculty
  - high percentage of staff turnover
  - inadequate leadership
  - insufficient authority for fundamental change

Turnaround vs. School Improvement:

- Turnaround focuses on the most significantly under-performing schools.

- Turnaround involves dramatic, transformative change.

Inadequate Response to Date:

- Inadequate Design – lack of ambition, comprehensiveness, integration and networking support

- Inadequate Capacity – fragmented training initiatives instead of an all-encompassing people strategy and strong, integrated partnerships that support the mission

- Inadequate Incentive Change - driven more by compliance than buy-in

- Inadequate Political Will – episodic and sometimes confusing policy design, under-funding, inconsistent political support

Lessons from the Turnaround Schools

- Success requires
  - clearly defined authority to act
  - relentless focus on hiring and staff development
  - highly capable, distributive school leadership
  - additional time
  - performance-based behavioral expectations
  - integrated, research-based programs and related social services

The Three Cs of School Turnaround

- Changing Conditions – creating the authority to make necessary changes in low-performing schools

- Building Capacity – use of an integrated approach organized by a single "systems integrator"

- Clustering for Support - organized around identified needs – e.g., school type (EL, MS, HS), student characteristics, feeder patterns or region

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

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APPENDIX C: RESULTS FROM BRAINSTORMING SESSION

Promising Practices from Kentucky High Performing Schools and Districts

Instruction/ Instructional Core	
	Hire people who can relate to and motivate students, get them excited about learning. Build relationships, connections and community within secondary schools.
	Attract and retain high-performing teachers in low-performing schools.
	Make teaching more collaborative and less about going into your classroom and closing the door.
	Assure that the best teachers teach the students of greatest need. Place the best teachers in the neediest schools.
	Believe that students learn more when they are authentically engaged.
	Create a team of trained professionals within the district that are competent at coaching for improved instruction.
	Create a system of professional learning communities throughout the district that will translate into a sustainable system of district-wide improvement.
	Create professional learning communities (PLCs), and make sure that teachers are allowed the opportunity to participate in PLCs in their districts.
	Create a system of teacher professional development that includes carving out a block of time for teachers to work together (e.g., early release every Wednesday). Teachers no longer work in isolation but work together on content issues, such as: *What is it we want our students to know? *How will we know if each student has learned it? *How will we respond when some students do not learn it? *How can we enrich and extend the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency? *How do we create a "no-fail" culture?
	Provide a common base of professional knowledge and readings.
	Develop and continually refine a strong, systematic, content and instructionally-focused professional development program for staff.
	Construct curriculum for a cycle of professional development that honors the foundations of great instructional practice.
	Develop and continually refine a new teacher induction program.

Instruction/ Instructional Core	
	Focus on the instructional core – get the core right first, and be relentlessly results-driven.
	Assure specific intervention strategies and methods for differentiating instruction are provided to teachers in all content areas; provide safety nets that take place within the school day.
	Teach every teacher how to intervene with every student in their own classrooms, rather than sending them to ESS, special education or the principal's office.
	Assure interventions occur simultaneously from the top down and the bottom up.
	Continue development and refinement of district curriculum documents to include more teaching resources developed by teacher teams.
	Work on the ratio of teacher/student interaction in instruction. Currently it is 80% teacher and 20% student, but a preferred goal is 40% teacher and 60% student.
	Challenge ALL students with a rigorous curriculum and expand participation in the Advanced Placement program. One highly diverse school already reached its 2009 goal of 25% of students enrolled in AP classes. The school recruited students in the achievement gap into these AP classes, as well as scheduling their AP teachers to teach collaborative classes. Early bird classes and lunch reviews are offered to assist students in mastering achievement goals.
	Establish a strong formative assessment component to help determine student academic strengths and weaknesses.
	Create an interim assessment system.
	Use assessment data to drive instructional decisions.
	Create a system of visits by teachers to every student's home. For new students, the visit occurs within 30 days of the beginning of school.
	Develop an individualized education program for each student.
	Make the Kentucky Core Content Tests more engaging for students. A school created the CATS Captains, where students who might not be expected to score well on the CATS assessment were put in a program to prepare them for online testing. The students were told they were selected because they had good technology skills and leadership skills, and they would be responsible for going back and sharing what they had learned with their peers. They were taken through daily training, and of the 32 students in the program the first year, none of the students scored novice.
	Incorporate fun, but rigorous, support activities for all content areas to enhance student interest. Assure variety in instructional practices through different delivery mediums – Geography Bees, Word Walls, SmartBoards, iPods, Art Museums, Forensic Science Week.
	Market to students.
	Assure that solutions are individualized to the school, as the same solution will not work in every school.

Instruction/ Instructional Core	
	Make connections between elementary, middle and high schools.
	Find and use best practices. One school created, at the middle school level, the Children Are Reading Excellently (CARE) program for all entering students who are not reading on grade level. The lowest-scoring students go to the best teachers.
	Belong to networks. There is value and information in networking with other professionals.
Culture/High Expectations	
	Teach children, not subjects or content. Create success for each individual child – identify and build upon strengths and interests.
	Meet the basic needs of students early and consistently; pay attention to the child holistically; address Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
	Manifest positive belief statements throughout all schools, grades and content areas.
	Believe that all children can learn.
	Believe that teachers influence learning more than any other factor.
	Believe that working together as a team, schools, parents and communities can help all students reach their potential.
	Assure that the focus is on the kids. The focus must be on high expectations for all kids. Every child in the school needs to find a niche. The school must find success for every child in some area. If you help students to do so, they will break the cycle of low performance.
	Have high expectations – of students, of faculty, of the ability to accomplish great things, of teacher content knowledge, of teacher and student relationships.
	"If the kids don't achieve, it's the adults' fault, not the kids'."
	Name and claim individual low-performing students.
	Assure that any decisions made place the needs of students, not adults, first.
	Face the brutal facts – bring forward and address the tough issues that face our schools.
	Question long-held truths; require research-based decision-making.
	Create positive tension among school staff, so that all staff are encouraging each other and constantly asking how they can improve.
	Take the position that, if parents are unable to facilitate a student's education and provide the help the child needs to move along, then the teacher or another adult in the school will do this.
	All schools have calling cards – something they are proud of. Focus on this and build school and community spirit around it.

Culture/High Expectations	
	Build relationships, connections and community within secondary schools.
	Make sure that everyone is engaged in the high school experience – recognition is important for the students.
	Celebrate and build on successes while holding students accountable for best performance possible. Get students to buy into doing well for intrinsic reasons or because it is important to their classmates and the adults they work with, not for the promise of a reward. Target specific groups or populations to make goals more realistic.
	Schedule to create additional time for teacher collaboration and planning, and attend to the management of time in the instructional day.
	Analyze scheduling to find time to provide additional assistance to students. One school realized the kids that needed the most help were not getting it. They were not able to go to tutoring, parents were requesting specific teachers, and the schedule did not allow them to get the help they needed. So, the school added a flexible block of time during the day for each team of 7th- and 8th-grade teachers to use at its discretion to meet the individual needs of students.
	Build in time for students and teachers to develop relationships – relationships are critical. Engage students individually, and make connections with all students – it is critical for each student to have at least one adult at school with which they have a positive relationship.
	Celebrate each and every individual and group accomplishment (academic as well as athletic), while continuing to build upon the idea of school spirit and the "_____ High School Experience." Designate a "Renaissance" leadership class charged with leading the school – these students organize and conduct school celebrations of success. Make sure that when successes are celebrated, students who are not always fully engaged are pulled in to the celebrations and their successes are celebrated.
	Don't re-invent the wheel. When you hear of a good thing, take it, adapt it and use it.
	Target good things that are going on and build on those things. Maximize your efforts - look for a few good things where you may be able to get a big jump.
	Place a greater emphasis on co-curricular activities as a part of the outreach process.
	Include home visits as a part of the school's community outreach process.
	Simplify what schools must understand and address. There are too many programs. Look at the programs in schools and make decisions about the critical programs needed. Ensure that there is a coherent alignment of the programs that remain.
Leadership	
	Undertake a critical examination of hiring and retention practices for staff.
	Consider changes to the way that principals and teachers are hired, assigned and reassigned. Consider alternatives to current leadership structures.
	Begin to look at hiring for disposition as much as for content knowledge. A teacher can be taught content knowledge, but can't be taught to care.

Leadership	
	Hire people who can relate to and motivate students and get them excited about learning.
	Hire outstanding teachers and empower highly effective teachers to lead. Stay out of the way of great teachers and expect them to mentor young teachers. Encourage all staff. Tell educators that, when they bring a concern, they also must bring a solution. When looking at what is possible, rather than saying "no," address by asking "How can we make this happen?" At this school, teachers have become accountable to each other.
	Address the issue of staff members who cannot achieve as expected. "We have to deal with good people who may not be good teachers. It is tough, but we have to do it."
	Develop and nurture leadership across all levels – superintendent, principal and teacher. Free up the principal to focus on instructional leadership by giving him or her a School Administrative Manager (SAM). Give superintendents the power to hire and assign principals. With authority, assure accountability at each leadership level.
	Make sure that leadership teams provide for shared, distributive leadership opportunities. Leadership teams should occur at both the district and the school level and include a variety of perspectives in leadership positions. True leaders (teachers) should have a strong voice.
	Assure that leadership's focus is student-centered, with high expectations for all students.
	Assure that leadership shares a common focus, and the focus is instructional, rather than on management. Assure that leadership across all levels shares this instructional focus.
	Create professional learning communities (PLCs) among staff to allow for professional planning, collaboration, learning and reflection.
	Strengthen the concept of professionalism in our conversations and actions – lead by example.
	Promote student leadership. Students should be encouraged and taught how to take responsibility for problem-solving and finding solutions.
	Assure that instructional leadership teams have outcomes and job descriptions.
	Assure that everyone understands what it takes to increase student achievement.
	Assure connections across the system.
	Make sure that schools and districts "confront the brutal facts" that are contained in the data. Data come from many sources, so "this is not just about the test."
	Train teachers in the "_____ County/Independent way," and make sure they have adequate coaching and are consistently challenged.
	Coordinate resources, programs and systems; establish timelines/deadlines for programs to work. Quickly discontinue unsuccessful practices, and expand promising practices. Review and revise plans periodically to assure continuing relevance and success.

Leadership	
	Change or eliminate some of the rules by which schools and districts must operate; create "turnaround zones" and provide support and assistance to those zones.
Parent/ Community Engagement	
	Create community, family and school partnerships and involve community groups and role models to work with students, provide scholarships and other resources. "Open the front door."
	Assure a broad range of community partnerships – make sure that all community members are involved and "own" the problems.
	Believe that, working together as a team, schools, parents and communities help students reach their potentials.
	Educate the community and business partners so they will understand why we are educating students. Attempt to alleviate fears by parents and the community that well-educated students will leave their communities. Engage the help of the business community to communicate the need for an educated populace in economic terms.
	Critically examine how the school and district interact with parents and the community for opportunities to improve relationships with them.
	Assure effective communication, both internal and external. The Partnership for Successful Schools has developed a toolkit around effective internal communications because of findings that internal communications were sometimes less effective than originally thought.
Policy	
	Legislation should clearly outline the authority the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) has to remove superintendents in chronically low-performing districts. Once clear, the KBE should exercise this authority when necessary. This legislation also should include a provision that, the first year a school performs poorly, a plan is put into place to correct the problems or the principal should be removed. Educate boards of education as to what they need to look for in a superintendent. KDE may need to provide some protection for superintendents trying to do the right thing. There will be a need for incentives and supports along with these provisions.
	Extend VPAT to Superintendent CEO Network superintendents – schools can only reach proficiency if it is a collaborative effort. Low-performing schools need to know what a good school looks like. Many times, they are unaware. This would promote the development of PLCs.
	Improve the principal preparation and selection process.
	Assure immediate consequences from KDE for low-performing schools and districts that do not show improvement. Provide for more immediate consequences than current timelines require. If schools and districts fail to improve, consequences should be immediate.

APPENDIX D: TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Blue Ribbon Panel on Interventions in Low Performing Schools

Dave Adkisson	President	Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
Rosz Akins	Retired Teacher	Fayette County school district
David Baird	Assistant Director	Kentucky School Boards Association
Mary Ann Blankenship	Executive Director	Kentucky Education Association
Elisabeth Brown	Principal	Chandlers Elementary School, Logan County
Susie Burkhardt	Teacher	Simpsonville Elementary School, Shelby County
Claude Christian	Branch Manager	Division of Federal Programs & Instructional Equity, KDE
Roger Cleveland	Assistant Professor	Morehead State University
Kevin Cosby	Pastor	St. Stephens Church
Jane Couch	Retired Teacher	Johnson County school district
David Cox	Director of Academic Programs	Corbin Independent school district
Ken Draut	Associate Commissioner	Office of Assessment and Accountability, KDE
Elaine Farris	Deputy Commissioner	Bureau of Learning and Results Services, KDE
Gary Fields	Principal	Bowling Green High School
Bonnie L. Freeman	Member	Kentucky Board of Education
Susan French	Principal	Field Elementary School, Jefferson County
Johnnie Grissom	Associate Commissioner	Office of Special Instructional Services, kDE
Ronda Harmon	Executive Director	Kentucky Association of School Councils
Sherron Jackson	Assistant Vice-President	Council on Postsecondary Education
Brady Link	Superintendent	Graves County school district
Tim Moore	Superintendent	Mason County school district
Helen Mountjoy	Secretary	Education Cabinet
Marco Munoz	Specialist III	Jefferson County school district
Polly Page	Director	Partnership for Successful Schools

Richard Prewitt	Principal	Whitley County Middle School
Frank Rasche	Representative	House of Representatives
Steve Schenck	Associate Commissioner	Office of Leadership & School Improvement
Bob Sexton	Executive Director	Prichard Committee
Stu Silberman	Superintendent	Fayette County school district
Jamie Spugnardi	Associate Commissioner	Office of Teaching & Learning, KDE
Larry Stinson	Associate Commissioner	Office of District Support Services, KDE
Frank Welch	Retired Superintendent	Pike County school district
Doug Whitlock	President	Eastern Kentucky University

APPENDIX E: THE PROCESS

The panel was first convened on February 25, 2008, in the Ground Floor Auditorium of the Capital Plaza Tower in Frankfort. After outlining his vision and giving the charge to the group, Commissioner Draud turned the agenda over to Elaine Farris, deputy commissioner of the KDE Bureau of Learning and Results Services, who led the work.

In that meeting, the panel members:

- heard from Johnnie Grissom and Steve Schenck, KDE associate commissioners, about how KDE identifies schools as low-performing under CATS and NCLB
- were provided information from Farris and KDE Associate Commissioner Ken Draut about the schools that were projected to meet their performance goals by 2014
- were provided with information about strategies and resources that KDE is currently using in low-performing schools

In the afternoon, the panel was divided into groups that reviewed research on successful intervention strategies to assist low-performing schools, as well as access to the Internet to allow additional research. Panel members discussed and prioritized their top six recommendations to improve low-performing schools based on both the resources provided and their personal experiences. After that meeting, this work was combined, and the recommendations fell into four major headings:

- Instruction/Interventions
- Leadership
- Community Engagement
- Culture/High Expectations

The panel met for the second time on March 24, 2008, in the same location. At that meeting, panel members:

- reviewed a handout of individual Kentucky schools and the gap between their accountability indices and 100 (proficiency)
- looked at a list of variance points that showed the indicators on the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement where there was the greatest difference in high- and low-performing schools
- heard from the Kentucky School Boards Association about its Lighthouse Project work with boards of education
- broke into four groups to hear and discuss presentations from leaders of high-performing schools and districts about the practices they thought were making the most difference in increasing student achievement

After that meeting, the results of the group work were combined with the work from the February meeting into an interventions matrix.

The panel met for the third time on May 5, 2008, and continued its work. At that meeting, the members:

- received information on the work around assistance to low-performing schools through a presentation from Blake Haselton, executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents (KASS), including the Voluntary Partnership Assistance Team (VPAT) process
- were provided more in-depth information from Deputy Commissioner Elaine Farris about work that had been shared previously – the work by the Mass Insight organization on The Turnaround Challenge
- broke out into groups to obtain some more of the panel's ideas and input in three specific areas:
  - recommendations on the most effective intervention strategies to recommend to Commissioner Draud
  - recommendations on ways KDE might provide assistance to low-performing schools differently
  - recommendations on the contents of a legislative package (or needed regulatory change) to address how to deal with the lowest-performing schools and districts

The work from the three groups on May 5 yielded excellent results. Commissioner Draud asked that, from those discussions, a set of recommendations be pulled together to be taken back to the panel for its input prior to dissemination. The plan was to have a set of recommendations from the group that could be reviewed by the Kentucky Board of Education by August of 2008 and available to schools and districts by the beginning of the 2008-09 school year.

On June 24, 2008, the Blue Ribbon Panel met to give its input on a draft report of the work. The panel met in small groups to review the report as a whole and to drill down more deeply into the sections of the report worked on at the May 5 meeting. Valuable input was received at the gathering for incorporation into the final report. Following the meeting, a document including these revisions was circulated to the members for additional input.

Notes